



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THAT COMMON THREAD IN THE BIBLE #2

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

There is not the remotest hint the faithful of three dispensations will be rewarded eternally with a renovated earth as home. The earth is not the “home of the soul” about which we have sung so frequently and fondly. A renovated earth has NEVER been part and parcel of this common thread.

By common I do not refer to something of little or of no value. Recall that the inspired Jude referred to the common salvation (Jude 3). The Bible is incomparable and in a class all by itself. It is the Divine Book from the Timeless Trinity and addressed to the spiritual needs of humanity.

The thread to be interwoven into this article runs from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:21 or nearly all the Holy Bible. Hence, we are making a serious study that is vastly important and of overwhelming value.

The first article (Oct/18) was largely negative. This one will be largely positive. God’s Book is negative and positive. Balance does not allow ignoring the negative and majoring in the positive.

SOME PRECIOUS POSITIVES

The crown of all creation in Genesis was the forming of man and woman — Adam and Eve. God knew they would multiply into countless billions before time ends at the second advent of His only begotten Son. Being all-wise and all-knowing, He knew man would sin and would need redemption above anything else. It was in the eternal purpose and planning

of the infinite Mind of God that one of the Godhead Three would come to earth and become a ransom for man’s sins. The Father (or First Person) would not be coming. The Holy Spirit (or third Person) would not descend to accomplish redemption. The Second Person, the Eternal Word, Jesus the Christ, would come to earth for the rich redemption of the lost sons and daughters of Adam’s race. Jesus was foreordained for this mighty mission before the foundation of the world as per 1 Peter 1:20.

As far as man was concerned, Genesis 3:15 was the beginning of his knowledge of the Scheme of Human Redemption.

Years, decades, centuries and millenniums would come and go before the fruition of this plan with Christ and the saving Gospel.

The Patriarchal Dispensation played a major role. In this age we have the faith of Abel, Noah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The book of Genesis tells their story. Abrahamic promises are given beginning in Genesis 12. The main one, by far, was the future sending of the “Seed” — the Christ (cf. Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). The common thread is getting longer and far more promising. The three founding fathers of the nation were Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob. Hereafter, Jehovah would be known as the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. What a marvelous compliment this was to these holy patriarchs. Joseph would save Jacob’s family in Egypt.

At the age of eighty Moses became the leader, led them out of Egyptian serfdom and ultimately to the eastern banks of the Jordan River. Joshua played a major role as well as faithful Judges such as Gideon and Samuel. Samuel aided in the lengthening of this common thread; so did David, so did the Major Prophets; so did the Minor Prophets. The Inner Period between Malachi and Matthew saw that common thread unbroken. All these, from Moses at Sinai to Calvary, lived under the Mosaic Covenant which was for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Moses cogently confirmed in Deuteronomy 5:3-5.

From Sinai in the Book of Exodus to the beginning of the New Testament, several events were essential in the working out of this common thread. Jehovah was preparing the nation of Israel during the wilderness wandering and the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. God selected the

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That Common Thread...



Editorial...

HEAVEN ON EARTH? No! #3

Garland M. Robinson

Please, please brethren, renewed earth brethren, I beg you, don't resist the truth. Love the truth and embrace it.

Warnings about “adding to” and “taking from” God’s Word are found throughout the Bible. They are found near its beginning (Deut. 4:2), in its middle (Prov. 30:6) and at its end (Rev. 22:18-19; cf. Acts 5:29). See also Deut. 12:32; 5:32; 17:20; Josh. 1:7; Exodus 7:2; 40:16; Lev. 10:1; 18:4; Eccl. 3:14). “*Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him*” (Job 13:7)? What does the Bible say on this vital subject?

The brethren in Galatia were told by the apostle Paul, “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:6-9).

A renewed and renovated earth doctrine is another Gospel. It’s not the same Gospel we read about in the Bible. Stephen spoke to those who were resisting the way of God (Acts 7:51). Paul also wrote of those who resist the truth (2 Tim. 3:8). Peter said, “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). Please, please brethren, renewed earth brethren, I beg you, don’t resist the truth. Love the truth and embrace it (cf. Zech. 8:19). It’s tragic indeed, but so many don’t love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

The Lord’s kingdom is not OF this world nor FROM this world. It’s not an earthly, physical, tangible kingdom. It can’t be seen with human eyes. Jesus said to Pilate, “*...my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be*

delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). Notice what Jesus said. His kingdom is not OF this world. This world is earthly, physical. If His kingdom were of this world (a fleshly, physical kingdom), then His servants would fight to prevent Him from being delivered to the Jews. Isn’t that simple? One has to have help to misunderstand that.

Before Pentecost, the apostles had an earthly misconception of the kingdom. Just before Jesus ascended up into heaven they asked Him, “*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel*” (Acts 1:6)? They thought the kingdom would be a military, political kingdom where Jesus would conquer the Romans and restore Palestine to its former glory that existed during the days of king David of a thousand years before. If the renewed earth doctrine is correct, the Lord truly missed a great opportunity on this occasion to point it out to the apostles and the whole world. But, the Lord’s kingdom is not earthly, it’s spiritual.

In Luke 17:20-21 Jesus said, “*...The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*” The Lord’s kingdom is not something that can be seen or observed with human eyes. It’s not physical, material, tangible. You can’t point to it and say “there it is.”

In Romans 14:17 Paul wrote, “*...the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*” It’s not subject to physical things. Food and drink are physical. The Lord’s kingdom is spiritual.

John 6:15, “*When Jesus therefore*

perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” Here’s another missed opportunity for Jesus to take advantage of the moment if His kingdom were of the earth. But He did not.

Colossians 1:13, “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*” Those who become Christians are rescued, removed, turned away from spiritual darkness and made new creatures in Christ. That’s spiritual, not physical.

Jesus tells Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). Nicodemus misunderstood and asked how he could enter into his mother’s womb a second time and be born. However, Jesus was speaking of a “spiritual birth,” not a physical birth. Human eyes can’t see into the spiritual realm, but our spiritual eyes can. I see that spiritual realm, don’t you? I can see it because that is what is described for us in the Scriptures. We see it by faith. And remember, “*...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Remember, whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Man can’t prevent the success of God’s plan. God watches over His word to perform it (Jer. 1:12). The Lord’s kingdom is not earthly. Those who believe heaven will be on earth at the Lord’s second coming completely ignore what Jesus said. It doesn’t fit their contrived imagination so they conveniently twist it around to suit their own doctrine. Otherwise, they would have to give it up. Remember, our hope is in heaven, not on earth (Col. 1:5).

There is a realm beyond this world called heaven. It’s not limited to this earthly, physical, material world. It can’t be observed with fleshly, human eyes. It’s a spiritual realm. However, we can see that spiritual place with our spiritual eyes — eyes of faith.

Jesus told His disciples, “*...In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I GO to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:1-3). What the Lord said is as plain as plain can be.

If He meant that He would leave this earth for a while and then come back to live with us for eternity on a renewed earth, He sure missed a great opportunity to reveal it.

Jesus said He was going away to his Father's house in heaven (His dwelling place, 1 Kings 8:30,39,43,49). While at His Father's house He would prepare a "place" for His disciples and then He would come back to "receive" them unto Himself.

The Greek word translated "receive" (John 14:3, *paralambano*) is found 49 times in the New Testament and is translated with the words: receive (1), received (13), receiving (1), take (5), taken (5), taketh (8), took (16). The word means to "receive or take to yourself." Notice other verses where the word is used: Paul "received" the Gospel (unto himself) and then presented it to others (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1,3). Joseph was to "take" the infant Jesus (unto himself) and then go into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod (Matt. 2:13,20). He "took" him (unto himself) and then went into Egypt (Matt. 2:14). Jesus "took" Peter, James and John (unto Himself) and

then went to pray (Matt. 26:37). The soldiers "took" Jesus (unto themselves) and then went into the common hall (Matt. 27:27). The jailor "took" Paul and Silas (unto himself), and then washed their stripes and was baptized (Acts 16:33). All of these verses use the same Greek word.

Jesus went to his Father's dwelling place in heaven to prepare a place for the redeemed and said, "...I will come again, and **receive you unto myself**; that where I am, there ye may be also." Renewed earth advocates completely ignore what the Lord said He would do and have "us receiving Jesus" instead of "Jesus receiving us." If what the Lord said is not clear enough, He even specified where we will be "after" He has received us. It is where He is. Where is He? In heaven. Where did He go to prepare us a place? In heaven. He receives us unto Himself (in heaven), not where we are (on earth). Did the Lord not mean what He said? We shouldn't have any trouble understanding what He said. Why would anyone twist the Lord's words around to make it say the opposite of what it says? It's be-

cause they have a false doctrine to uphold! Sorry renewed earth 'dreamers,' your doctrine falls apart in light of Truth!

The Holy Spirit compliments what Jesus said in John 14. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, the saints will be "caught up" (taken away, carried off) to meet the Lord in the air (away from the earth). "Heaven on earth" doctrine apparently says that after we meet Him in the air, He will bring us back down to live with Him on the earth. Don't hold your breath while trying to find where the Bible says that! Verse 17 says the saints will "ever" (always, evermore) be in the air, in heaven with Him (not on the earth). If Jesus brings us back down to live on the earth, how can we "ever be" with Him in the air? You can't get the idea of living on a renewed earth out of that. The renewed earth doctrine falls down flat!

Let me plead with you again, please, please, come out from this error. Love the truth. Obey the truth and you will be forgiven.

That Common Thread...

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judges from Othniel to Samuel. Further developments occurred during the United Kingdom, the Divided Kingdom, the Chaldean Captivity, their return to their homeland subsequent to the 70 years in Captivity and the Inner Testament Period from Malachi to Matthew. During these eventful years we have many of the great Old Testament prophets inclusive of the Major and Minor Prophets. What a task they performed.

Four empires from the 600's B.C. to the A.D. era played a role in coming to the "fulness of time" (Gal. 4:4) and the lengthening of this common thread. Indirectly, Babylon paved the way for the coming of Jewish synagogues used so effectively by Jesus and His apostles. The Medo-Persian Empire contributed a respect for law. The Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great made possible the wide acceptance of the beautiful and very accurate Greek language. All New Testament books were penned in Greek. The Romans made it easy to travel

from country to country which the apostles, especially Paul, employed and had a peaceful world for Christ and the beginning of Christianity. Roman persecution against Christians came later. God used all these in mighty fashion.

But now, back to Sacred Scripture. The worthy and wonderful work of John the Baptist, the Christ and His faithful followers kept that common thread in perfect line. Forcefully, Jesus affirmed His fulfillment of the law, the prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:47). Minus Christ and Christianity, that common thread would have been broken and never put back into operation. The Timeless Trinity (Jehovah, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit) NEVER intended for that coming thread of man's redemption and coming UP to heaven for an eternity to be on a dressed-up earth. It was NEVER their plan to renovate this old earth as an eternal residing realm for the redeemed. Redemption and going UP to heavenly habitations constituted that common thread in the Bible.

Among ALL Biblical penmen from Moses to John in the Book of Revelation, there is not the remotest hint

that all babies who died before becoming accountable and the faithful of three dispensations will be rewarded eternally with a renovated earth as home. This earth is not the "home of the soul" about which we have sung so frequently and fondly.

This common thread did not end with Revelation 22:21. It has continued for about 2,000 years among God's faithful saints. It remains firm and in force. It belongs to that everlasting kingdom (church) Jesus established in Acts 2. Peter linked everlasting with that kingdom in 2 Peter 1:11 — "*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" This thread will stretch to the second advent of Christ, the final judgment, the resurrection, the wicked sent to eternal Gehenna and the righteous taken UP into heaven, not remaining down here. Heaven is ABOVE not below; it is UP not down. A renovated earth has NEVER been part and parcel of this common thread.

Let's look in some detail as to why heaven is ABOVE not below — UP there and not down here. There is ab-

solutely no justification for changing the heavenly location. Who gave man the authority for this change? It is amazingly amazing that we have to teach some of our own brethren WHERE heaven will be and WHERE it will not be.

REFUTING TESTIMONY FROM THE INSPIRED PETER

Peter wrote eight chapters of the 260 comprising the New Testament — five in 1 Peter and three in 2 Peter. His final two chapters are militant and straightforward. He deals with errors extant in his day and with numerous “isms” that abound in modern religious circles. He deals with earth’s fiery destruction, the wonders of heaven and where it will be (which is not on earth).

Here is what the Holy Spirit prompted Peter to write in four power-packed verses, *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”* (2 Peter 3:7,10-12)? Where is “renovation” in this graphic message? It is not there. Peter knew better than to teach that error. So should we!

The destruction of the heavens needs words of explanation. Men speak of the seven heavens; the Bible speaks of three. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul was caught up into the third heaven. This implies a first heaven and a second heaven. These (1st & 2nd) are destined for a very fiery destruction. The third heaven is exempt from this destruction. It is the residing realm for the Timeless Trinity. They live ABOVE — not here below! I repeat; they live in the great ABOVE — not here below. This is where they shall reside in eternity. Angels, all babies who died before reaching an ac-

countable age and the redeemed will have their reward in the great ABOVE — not here on a renovated or an overhauled earth which will not be here subsequent to Christ’s second advent and final judgment.

These two heavens and a worn out earth are RESERVED for a fiery destruction. “Reserved” is not a synonym for “renovation” of a worn out earth.

That same powerful word of God which created heaven and earth in Genesis 1 will one day wrap this earth and the two heavens above us with absolute destruction. Verse 7 is an exceedingly strong refutation for a renovated earth in eternity. How could Peter have been any clearer on these matters than he was?

This inspired apostle is not through with earth’s fiery end at the close of verse 7. In verse 10 we have the noisy end of the heavens above; the elements MELTING with great heat and the earth with all its works being BURNED UP. Renovated? A thousand times NO! There is not a single solitary syllable about renovation in any of these four power-packed verses. A great preacher of the past was in company with a very wealthy land owner. The farmer, in bragging fashion, asked his preacher friend what he thought about all he had showed him. The preacher spared no feelings by stating, “It is going to burn up!” And indeed it will without fail. Peter assures us of such certainty. Both Peter and this preacher knew no renovation here.

In verse 11 all these things are going to be DISSOLVED. How can any rational mind see renovation in dissolved?

In verse 12 we are treated to more about the dissolving of the heavens and the melting of the elements. No renovation here, for a surety.

Peter knew better than to write of renovation. In John 13:36 the Lord told him that he (Peter) could not follow Him now but later would follow Him. Where was the Lord going? UP to heaven. Both the Christ and Simon Peter knew the exact location of heaven — UP — not down here on a renovated earth. Peter refuted in 2 Peter 3 the Rapture, the 1,000 year reign of Christ on this earth and Jehovah’s Witness doctrine which has 144,000 in heaven and the remainder on this renovated earth. Have some

of our brethren been reading Charles Russell and Judge Rutherford on these matters? Peter knew far more about end times and the great beyond than all uninspired leaders put together. I recommend Peter for an accurate source of undeniable truth. He also refuted some of our current preachers who are not “in the know” relative to heavenly location.

But what about the “new heavens” and the “new earth?” Peter used here a Greek term *kainos*. It refers to something fresh and new — not something old, worn out and destined for destruction. At the final end, this old worn-out earth and the two heavens above us will have served their God-given purpose and will be no more, PERIOD. A consuming fire will make them things of the past and not a renewed or renovated earth. Of a certainty, they are not eternal in duration regardless of those who teach otherwise!

We live on earth and derive our living from it plus the two heavens above us. What better way to depict heavenly habitations than describe them as the new earth and the new heavens? Inspired John does the same in Revelation 21:1-2,5.

In speaking of new heavens and a new earth, Peter has the same realm in mind as he stated in 1 Peter 1:4. It reads, *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved IN HEAVEN for you”* (Emphasis supplied). Note, IN HEAVEN — not down here on a so-called renovated earth. There will be NO earth to renew or renovate!

The common thread in the Bible is comprehensively striking and beautiful indeed. It includes man’s creation, his fall, preparation in the Old Testament for Jesus Christ to come to earth in the fullness of time, live victoriously, become God’s Lamb to take away sin, be raised from the dead, ascend back to heaven, establish the church, prepare a place for His people, come the second time, judge all men, consign the wicked to hell and take His people UP INTO HEAVEN — not to a renewed or renovated earth.

There is NO doubt about the direction of heaven. It is UP, NOT DOWN. Everlasting life is ABOVE, not down here BELOW!

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“THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH” #3

Gary McDade

The theme of Randy Alcorn’s book *Heaven* is that the earth will not be destroyed at the end of the world but will become the permanent place for not only all the multiplied billions who have inhabited it over the centuries but even for God, the Father, Himself and all the “innumerable company of angels” that are in heaven now. Every being in the universe will inhabit this earth. There will be no beings anywhere else in the universe but the earth. The earth will not be a spiritual place, but it will be as it is right now, a physical place. Unlike the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ view of an eternal earth, Alcorn and his followers believe heaven as it now exists will be brought down to earth and nothing will exist outside of the earth and its immediate atmosphere. Alcorn stated his theme in blistering terms against those who do not go along with him:

What lies behind our notion that God is going to destroy the earth and be done with it? I believe it’s a weak theology of God. Though we’d never say it this way, we see him as a thwarted inventor whose creation failed. Having realized his mistake, he’ll end up trashing most of what he made. His consolation for a failed Earth is that he rescues a few of us from the fire. But this idea is emphatically refuted by Scripture. God has a magnificent plan, and we will *not* surrender Earth to the trash heap (p.90).

In order to be unmistakably clear as to what Alcorn teaches on this, hear him, “He [God, the Father] will actually come to live among us on the New Earth” (p.184). What about Jesus? “He will also physically reside on the earth with us” (p.188).

The theme of Randy Alcorn’s book on *Heaven* strives for the sensational. Observe, “Heaven, God’s dwelling place, will one day be on the New Earth.” Further,

That God would come down to the New Earth to live with us fits perfectly with his original plan. God could have taken Adam and Eve up

to Heaven to visit with him in his world. Instead he came down to walk with them in their world (Genesis 3:8). Jesus says of anyone who would be his disciple, “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). This picture is of God’s ultimate plan — not to take us up to live in a realm made for him, but to come down and live with us *in the realm he made for us*.

...The Incarnation is about God inhabiting space and time as a human being — the new heaven and New Earth are about God making space and time his *eternal* home. As Jesus is God incarnate, so the New Earth will be Heaven incarnate (pp. 45-46).

Since the book called *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn is being recommended, preached, and followed by some members of the churches of Christ, a quick look at the author will give the background for the erroneous teachings it contains. Randy Alcorn is a denominational preacher who teaches at two schools in Oregon. Each of them have doctrinal statements on their websites their students and faculty are to uphold (See: www.multnomah.edu/about/doctrinal-statement/ and www.westernseminary.edu/academics/what-we-believe). Salvation by faith only, baptism is not necessary for salvation, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, the eternal security of the believer (“once saved, always saved), and premillennialism are some of the articles of faith. Each of these positions is also taught in Alcorn’s book on *Heaven* (e.g., pp.34-36, 47-48, 97, 134, 145). When a book like this is being recommended by a preacher and an eldership in a local congregation, serious and spiritually destructive consequences go with that, and it is not enough to say, “Take the meat off the bones” because there is no meat on the “bones” of this book, it all needs to be thrown out!

As a premillennialist, Randy Alcorn was already hardened by materialism when he wrote his book. The espousal of premillennialism puts its adherents in the same problematic position today

as that of the Jews in the time of Jesus’ personal ministry who rejected the spiritual kingdom of Christ (John 18:36) and crucified Him and looked for a material, physical kingdom such as that in the days of King Solomon. All premillennialists believe God failed in His promise to give all the land to Abraham and is obligated to restore all the Jews back to Palestine in order to finally fulfill that promise made in Genesis 13:15. Every premillennialist from C. I. Scofield and later on Hal Lindsey down to John Hagee and Tim LaHaye more recently, has closed his eyes and heart to Joshua 21:43 which says, “And the Lord gave unto Israel *all the land* which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein” (emphasis added). When confronted with this Bible teaching, premillennialists reply that while God did give Israel most of the land, He did not give them the entirety of the promised area, yet the Bible text affirms that “the Lord gave unto Israel *all the land!*” Further, attempting to rebut that truth, premillennialists argue that there are certain aspects of what God promised Abraham that were never fulfilled, so, therefore, God remains obligated to the Jews to return them to Palestine. Yet, two verses later Joshua put it in unmistakable, irrefutable terms when he declared, “There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; *all came to pass*” (emphasis added). And, Joshua is not only emphasizing the point with what he wrote in this chapter, for in chapter 23 he again underscores the subject, “And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that *not one thing hath failed* of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; *all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof*” (v.14, emphasis added).

It is one thing for denominational people who have agreed to the premillennial position in their creedal statements and heard it preached all their lives to promote it, but when a member of the church of Christ accepts the materialism of premillennialism, he or she cannot do so without rejecting the

preaching and teaching of the Bible, long cherished by those faithful to God's Word on the subject of the church being the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19).

When a preacher gets in the pulpit of the church of Christ and promotes a denominational preacher's book as a "first and foremost" source on a subject, his beliefs on other subjects in the source is drawn into question. Will those who are members of the church of Christ promoting Randy Alcorn's book on *Heaven* take issue with the author on his clearly stated and abundantly articulated belief of salvation by faith only, baptism is not necessary for salvation, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, the eternal security of the believer ("once saved, always saved), and premillennialism? If the reply is, "Well, of

course, he does not believe those things." How can we know he doesn't? We thought he believed Bible teaching on the Day of Judgment and the end of the world and he has said he no longer believes that. It is appropriate to ask him what he believes on other subjects in his reference source that he places "first and foremost." We know premillennialism, or vital elements of it, are now accepted because we are hearing that Jesus Christ is going to return to reign here on the earth.

When the elders of the 600 member Brownsville Road Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee stood in their pulpit and hoisted Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church* before the congregation in 1995 and declared they were going to use this book as a model whereby we will have "growth without

compromising your message and mission," no one could foresee that in five years they would close their doors — not relocate, not merge with another congregation, but close up! Gone! They had blinders on to look past the 40 denominational preachers that recommended the book in its flyleaf. The words of the prophet Hosea are the truth, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children*" (Hosea 4:6).

It is hard to fathom an eldership not taking note of what can, and has happened, when partnering with the denominations.

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THE REGENERATION

Bill Boyd

In 1833, Alexander Campbell published an "Extra" number of the *Millennial Harbinger* devoted to the subject of "Regeneration." He included part of this Extra in *The Christian System*, but it was reprinted in full in Volume 1 of *The Millennial Harbinger Abridged* (MHA vol 1). It is the latter that I will be referencing in this article. This is where Alexander Campbell argued that the "bath of regeneration" of Titus 3:5 was baptism for the remission of sins. His critics charged him with teaching "baptismal regeneration," but he clearly affirmed that Paul called baptism, "*the bath of regeneration*," because baptism was the completion of the spiritual regeneration process, and not the entire process itself.

This is the publication where Alexander Campbell, writing under the heading of "The Regeneration of the Heavens and the Earth," said the following: "The Bible begins with the generations of the heavens and the earth, but the Christian revelation ends with the regeneration or new creation of the heavens and the earth. This is the ancient promise of God, confirmed to us by the Christian Apostles. The present elements are to be changed by fire. The old or antediluvian earth was purified by water; but the present earth is reserved for fire, with all the works of man that

are upon it. It shall be converted into a lake of liquid fire. But the dead in Christ will have been regenerated in body before the old earth is regenerated by fire. The bodies of the saints will be homogeneous with the new earth and heavens as their present bodies are with the present heavens and earth. God re-creates, regenerates, but annihilates nothing; and therefore the present earth is not to be annihilated." (MHA vol 1, p.483). He goes on to describe this new earth by quoting almost in full Revelation 21:1-22:5.

Extracting this quotation as a proof text of Campbell's eschatology may cause some to conclude that Campbell did not think we were going to heaven, but this is not all Campbell wrote on this topic. Earlier in this same "Extra," Campbell wrote that Jesus, "ascended to the skies to prepare mansions for his disciples" (MHA vol 1, p.443). "But this pouring out of the influences, this renewing of the Holy Spirit is as necessary as the bath of regeneration to the salvation of the soul, and to the enjoyment of the hope of heaven, of which the Apostle speaks" (MHA vol 1, p.460). "Faith in this wonderful operation of God — hope for the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light, are the most powerful principles of action which God has ever planted in the human breast.

This is the transcendent hope of the Christian calling, which imparted such heroic courage to all the saints of eternal renown. This better resurrection, in prospect, has produced heroes, which make cowards of all the boasted chiefs of worldly glory. As the magnet needle ever points to the pole, so the mind influenced by this hope ever rises to the skies, and terminates on the fullness of joy and the pleasures forevermore, in the presence of and at the right hand of God" (MHA vol 1, p.462). "Most saints in this generation, appear more zealous that their children should shine on earth, than in heaven — and that they may be rich here, at the hazard of eternal bankruptcy" (MHA vol 1, p.468). "Every Christian family ought to be a nursery for God. Their offspring should be trained for the skies" (MHA vol 1, p.469). "If our affections are not placed on things above, we are unfit for the kingdom of glory" (MHA vol 1, p.471). On page 486, still in this very "Extra," he rhetorically set "the joys of heaven" against "the terrors of hell."

What are we to make of all this? When I read this many years ago I had an easy answer, "I am not a Campbellite." However, as I read Campbell through the years, I saw that his boldness and clarity sometimes belied his internal mental struggles. He was not

always consistent, and at times, he admitted as much. He could hold seemingly conflicting ideas in his mind without bringing them to a full reconciliation, and he enjoyed challenging common thought to generate debate. Others have documented the progression, and even vacillation, of Campbell's convictions concerning unity, fellowship, baptism, and cooperation. It is often best to read Campbell as one "thinking out loud." Campbell was heir to the thoughts of English theologians who had not fully reconciled their own ideas about a renewed earth and eternity in heaven, and it appears that Campbell had not fully reconciled these ideas either.

One of Campbell's struggles was with Matthew 19:28-29, where Jesus said to Peter and his apostles, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Campbell was a post-millennialist, that is, he thought there would be a golden age of the church on the earth preceding the second coming of Christ, hence the name of his publication, *The Millennial Harbinger*. In this Extra he had not settled on the meaning of "the regeneration" as Jesus used the term. He considered that this "regeneration of things" may be the "commencement of the Millennium," or it could be "the general resurrection" at the second coming, but he also allowed that it could be "the formation of a new church on the day of Pentecost," which he later called "the commencement of the Christian era" (MHA vol 1, pgs.455,539). Perhaps, if he had not been so enamored with his own

millennial views, he could have seen the passage clear.

Jesus said that "the regeneration" would be "when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory." Jesus is on the throne of his glory now (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:29-36; Eph. 1:20-23). That means the time of "the regeneration" is now. Campbell was right to call it, "the formation of a new church on the day of Pentecost," and "the commencement of the Christian era" (MHA vol 1, pgs.455,539).

Jesus also said that the apostles would, "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The throne is a symbol of authority, as were the keys in Matthew 16:19. They were not literal keys, and they were not to literally sit on literal thrones. The word given by the Spirit through the apostles is the authority for the church. When Jesus said they would be "judging the twelve tribes," he may have been speaking metaphorically of the church as God's people. The judge does not make the law; he reveals it and applies it. Much of the writings of the apostles is showing the church how to apply the law of Christ. If "the twelve tribes" is a reference to the children of the Old Covenant, then the apostles, as judges, would be showing the Jews how to correctly apply the teachings of the Old Covenant as a "schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:25) to the New. That is what they had authority to do.

The word translated "regeneration" in Matthew 19:28 is used but one other time in the Bible, and that in Titus 3:5, where Paul writes, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but

according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7). This is the time of mercy, grace, justification, salvation, and hope, and this is the time of "the washing of regeneration," therefore this is the time of the "regeneration" (Matt. 19:28).

In the context of the regeneration of Titus 3:5 Paul also wrote of "the hope of eternal life." Eternal life is also in the context of the regeneration of Matthew 19:28. A rich young man came to Jesus asking him what good thing he should do to have "eternal life" (Matt. 19:16). Jesus told him to sell what he had, give it to the poor, and he would have "treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:20). The man already had treasure on earth (Matt. 19:21). His earthly treasure did not satisfy his soul, and a renewed earthly treasure would not have satisfied him either. His "treasure in heaven" included the "eternal life" that he sought. This eternal life would be "in heaven." Jesus did not promise the young man eternal life on an eternal earth. After telling the rich young man eternal life was "in heaven," Jesus did not then tell his apostles that they would sit on material thrones of an eternal earth.

Campbell was good at taking a fresh look at Scripture and challenging common thoughts, but Jesus was better, and unlike Alexander Campbell, Jesus was always consistent.

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DANGERS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS #5

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

Randy Kea

The NKJV is widely used among churches of Christ. I know some younger preachers who have done all their memory work from this modern translation. Let me say at the outset in this article that the NKJV is certainly not dangerous in the sense that the NIV is dangerous. Another preliminary matter is the fact that

not all editions of the NKJV are the same. They differ from year to year and from country to country. So not all editions through the years will have the same issues that we will emphasize in this article.

One of the first passages I check when reviewing a translation is the Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage passages

(Matt. 5:32; 19:9, etc.). Unfortunately, the NKJV joins other pseudo-translations in not translating the 'one' and 'only one' reason for divorce and remarriage, i.e. "fornication." It uses the broad phrase "sexual immorality." This is too inclusive and would allow for multiple reasons for divorce and remarriage. For example: Ephesians 4:19 and Jude 4

speaks of “lasciviousness,” defined as “unbridled lust, indecent bodily movements, the unchaste handling of males and females.” All of these activities are sexually immoral and can lead to fornication, but they are not fornication. The modern dance is sexually immoral but is not fornication. In a world where people marry and divorce at will, and even in the church where many brethren persist in their error concerning M-D-R, we certainly don’t want a “Bible” that opens the gate for more reasons than the Scripture gives for divorce and remarriage. This is a doctrinal issue. One cannot teach a doctrine that promotes adultery or leaves people in an adulterous state and please the Lord.

Let’s consider some (not all) textual issues. The NKJV purports to be in line with the KJV history and tradition by their claim to use the Hebrew Masoretic text in the Old Testament (which underlies the KJV) and the Textus Receptus in the New Testament (which underlies the KJV). It is true that they use these two texts as their basis; however, in some editions of the NKJV there are numerous marginal notes in both the Old Testament and the New Testament that indicate clearly that they give equal credence and authority to various spurious sources in both testaments. Here are some of the abbreviations you will see: 1) the Old Testament — **DSS** (Dead Sea Scrolls); **Tg** (targum, an Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament); **LXX** (Septuagint, an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek); 2) the New Testament — **NU** (Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament and in the third edition of the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament); **M** (Majority Text).

The claim in the preface that the NKJV is following in the steps of the KJV history is not in harmony with what they practice by using these above faulty sources which cast doubt upon the integrity of the textual basis of the KJV. If you have an edition of the NKJV that uses these marginal notes, you can check Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11, Acts 8:37, and 1 Timothy 3:16 and see that the Critical Text (NU) is given equal standing alongside the Textus Receptus. (Remember the Critical Text changes the Textus Receptus in some 5,600 places involving almost 10,000 words in the Greek New Testament)

We have maintained from the beginning that the Hebrew Masoretic Text should be exclusively used for translating the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus should be exclusively used for translating the New Testament. (See my previous articles in “Seek The Old Paths” for internal and external evidence for this position.)

Another area of concern is that there are examples that can be noted that show there is a touch of dynamic equivalence in the NKJV although the claim in the preface is for complete equivalence in translation technique. For example, it can be shown in numerous places where pronouns have been used in place of nouns and nouns have been used in place of pronouns. For example: in Job 40:7 “loins” (noun, KJV) is changed to “yourself” (pronoun, NKJV). In Numbers 5:21 “priest” (KJV) is changed to “he” (NKJV). In Leviticus 8:15 “he” (KJV) is changed to “Moses” (NKJV).

Further, it has been pointed out by conservative textual scholarship that the NKJV omits the subjunctive mood in the translation process. The English language, along with other world languages such as Spanish, French, and so on, have three moods, *indicative*, *imperative* and *subjunctive*. The *indicative mood* is used to make factual statements. The *imperative mood* is used to express a request or command. The *subjunctive mood*, although comparatively rare, is still used in proper English to denote an action or a state as “conceived”

(and ‘not’ as a ‘fact’) and therefore used to express a “wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event” ... (Oxford English Dictionary, Vol 11). Here are some examples: John 3:2, “*except* God be with him” (KJV), “*unless* God is with him” (NKJV). John 3:5, “*except* a man be born...” (KJV), “*unless* one is born...” (NKJV). This change runs through the whole New Testament repeatedly.

If God uses a noun in His inspired word, does anyone have a right to change it to a pronoun? If He uses a pronoun, does anyone have the right to change it to a noun? When God uses a grammar mood, does man have the right to change a grammar mood? Remember, the Bible claims that “every word” therein is from God (Matt. 4:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; Matt. 24:35). If the NKJV takes such liberties with nouns, pronouns and moods, where else does it take liberty to change what the inspired record says? Do we want what the Holy Spirit revealed or alterations of it?

Finally, the preface of the NKJV makes the rather braggadocios claim that it will “unlock the spiritual treasures found uniquely in the King James Version.” We do not need any of the new translations to “unlock” anything found in the accurate, reliable, and faithful-to-the-text King James translation. If we encounter a word that we do not know in the KJV, we can get a dictionary and look it up while still having the confidence that it is the correct word used in the translation.

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